

A Dream *by the Dunes*

A perfectly situated custom-built home from Polhemus Savery DaSilva showcases water views from virtually every window.

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This house sits on a dynamic site that looks out over dunes and to the ocean. The new home replaces an out-of-character tear-down on an environmentally challenging site.



One of the shortest streets in Chatham has the most spectacular, sweeping ocean views in town.

When an oceanfront property popped up for sale in Chatham, it caught the eye of Aaron Polhemus, owner and CEO of the integrated architecture and construction firm Polhemus Savery DaSilva (PSD). He envisioned a classic beach house with an unobstructed, sweeping view of Chatham Harbor and the Atlantic beyond.

“This project was created as a custom home built for sale,” explains Polhemus. “PSD decided to get involved with this kind of project after viewing the incredible location.”

The lot had a small house and a garage on the site that PSD sought to remove and replace with a new house.

The project goal was to design a house that fit into the neighborhood architecturally and took advantage of its spectacular site by the beach and the water.

Mission accomplished.

“If we had designed a home in Chatham ourselves, this would have been it—it was like it was built for us,” say the new homeowners. “The day we decided to make our offer, we stood on the deck sipping our coffee as the early morning sun poured through the entire first floor and thought, ‘this is our dream home.’ It’s hard not to think the same thing every morning since we look out toward the water and the sunrise.”

A natural beauty

The classic, shingle-style two-story house looks like it’s always been part of the area, which has a mix of traditional New England architecture. The house is



A deck featuring a cedar and stainless-steel railing extends the entire rear of the house, opening up views of the harbor and ocean. The deck is accessible via the main living spaces, as well as from a side entry and first-floor primary bedroom.



The main living spaces are open to one another and showcase views of the ocean through oversized sliding glass panels. The elegant kitchen, by Classic Kitchens & Interiors, features white Shaker-style cabinets and a darker wood island. Brass hardware warms up the palette.

around 3,100 square feet, but seems compact and doesn't upstage the view or the neighborhood. The house's landscaping, also designed by PSD, is minimal and natural: hydrangea, inkberry, Kousa dogwood and beach grass. A white picket fence lends a classic New England flair, and the front entry features a handsome, columned portico.

A crushed shell driveway leads down to the rear of the property, where a walk-out lower level with wrapped

columns accommodates parking with a two-car garage and storage. The "backyard" sweeps up to a beach grass-covered bluff where a sandy path to the beach is barely visible.

The property's location created some design challenges: It lies within the Old Village Historic District, which had jurisdiction over existing properties, and within the Chatham Conservation Commission's jurisdiction, which required a lot of permitting. Polhemus said it took about

a year to obtain the necessary permits, including the town's Zoning Board of Appeals' approval.

"The site design was done very much in realizing that conservation was a critical focus," says Polhemus. "The project required mitigation, incorporating a natural landscape. We planted beach grass next to the driveway, for example, to create a buffer next to the dune and improve the conservation area. The design goal was to keep it clean and open. It was thoughtfully executed."

"A beach house was the goal, but this was such a site-sensitive project," agrees lead architect Sharon DaSilva. One of our goals was to make the house feel like part of the dunes."

Details that contribute to the Cape Cod character of the house include the gabled roof line, oversized windows, shutters and cedar shingles. The house had a town-mandated height limit of 30 feet.

Coastal and contemporary

Interior designer Carolyn Thayer worked with the team on finish selections and staged the decor for the future buyers. “I wanted the interiors to feel connected to the seaside location right when you walk in,” says Thayer. “A lot of clients are looking for this, especially in a home where there is a view of the ocean from virtually every window.” As a beach house suggests casual living, Thayer’s design uses natural fibers, a neutral color palette and carefully curated contemporary furniture that is inviting and informal.

The first floor features an open great room with living, dining, and kitchen areas. A NanaWall system across the rear of the house opens to a deck, further extending the living space. DaSilva chose a tray ceiling in the living room to create interest.

After a day at the beach, the mudroom with built-in cabinetry is essential for easy storage. Below: The marble-tiled fireplace wall and built-in shelves flank one side of the open great room. Carolyn Thayer Interiors used natural fibers, a neutral color palette and contemporary furniture for an inviting and informal design throughout the home.



Above: Both upstairs bedrooms feature water views and en suite bathrooms. A shiplap accent wall gives the room a coastal feel. Below: Almost every room in the house takes advantage of the vast seascape, including an upstairs bathroom.



The L-shaped kitchen, by Classic Kitchens & Interiors, features white Shaker-style cabinets and a darker wood island with two globe pendants, white with subtle black-veined quartz countertops and a dining area. Brass hardware warms up the palette. The kitchen is not large, but fits in a panel-front 36-inch refrigerator, 36-inch range, panel-front beverage refrigerator, panel-front dishwasher and built-in microwave. Storage in the adjacent pantry is ample, and there is also a bar sink and panel-front ice maker to separate entertaining and main food prep.

Sara Hamilton, a designer at Classic Kitchens & Interiors, describes the layout as a modified galley with a transitional style of painted white and stained walnut inset cabinetry. The details are simple, explains Hamilton, with a full-height



quartz backsplash, square edge and beveled moldings and a custom nickel-gap hood complementing millwork details throughout the open floorplan.

“I love the efficiency and elegance of this kitchen,” says Hamilton. “The best view is from the large island sink facing the ocean through a large wall of glass panels—absolutely stunning!”

A fireplace wall in the living area, flanked by built-in shelves, features large, 24-by-48 marble tiles that extend dramatically from floor to ceiling.

Timeless design

Light-toned oak flooring throughout evokes the color of beach sand. Shiplap, a common coastal element, is used along the staircase and in the bedrooms. A first-floor bedroom, which opens to the deck, has a sitting area with two wing chairs and an en suite bathroom with a reeded wood cabinet. A powder room, mudroom with a built-

in niche for coats and sandy shoes, laundry room and pantry complete the first floor.

Upstairs, there are two bedrooms, both with ocean views, and en suite bathrooms with tiled showers and custom cabinetry. There is an additional living room that opens to a small second-floor deck, and an additional bathroom.

“We tried to remain pretty timeless in the design so that you could walk into this house years from now and it would still feel fresh,” says Thayer.

The owners liked Thayer’s choices so much that they ended up buying all the furniture she chose for the house and contracted her for window treatments and other accoutrements.

“We can’t wait to share it with family and friends,” says the owners of their dream home. ▲

A terrace on the side of the house is the perfect spot for relaxing and soaking up the views. PSD served not only as the architect and builder of the house, but also as the landscape architect. Custom beach chairs from Cape Cod Beach Chair Company.



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The house glows in Chatham's beloved historic district. A barely visible sandy path cuts through the dunes and over the bluff, providing access to and from the new home and the beach.

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